GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
LABOUR
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:5941
ANSWERED ON:06.05.2002
IMPACT OF ASBESTOS MINING ON WORKERS HEALTH
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Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whethetr the Government are aware of the serious health consequences of mining of asbestos on workers/labours as brought out recently at Workshops held in capital;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government have failed to check the same because of heavy pressures from cement as well as asbestos lobby who are importing asbestos from Canada etc; and

(d) if so, the remedial steps taken or proposed to be taken to protect the health of workers?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI MUNI LALL)

(a) & (b): The Ministry of Labour is aware of theworkshops conducted by Indian Association of Occupational Health on 12th & 13th April, 2002 on Health-effects of hazardous and harmful minerals that have become extremely dangerous to human life causing cancer. However the outcome of the workshop is not known to us. The Government is aware of the possible efffects on health of excessive exposure to airborne asbestos dust in mining operations. The matter has been studied by various committees set up by the Government of India from time to time. TheDirectorate General of Mines Safety have also conducted medical and environmental survey in asbestos mines and mills. These studies have shown that the dust levels in Mining operations are below the limit of 2 fibers per milliliter of air in Metalliferous Mines Regulations, 1961. A recent report on `Study on Pollution Level in Asbestos Mines and Processing Plants of Rajasthan for lifting ban on expansion of asbestos mining by Indian Bureau of Mines also shows that asbestos dust levels in mining operations are well below Threshold Limit Value of 2 fibers per milliliter and the present dust levels are not likely to adversely effect the health of the workers.

(c) & (d): Government of India has taken effective administrative, legislative and enforcemental measures to ensure that the health of the persons employed in the asbestos mines is not adversely effected. Thus the question of getting pressurised by cement/asbestos lobby or any other organization does not arise. The following steps have been taken to protect the helath of the workers employed in the asbestos mines:-

(i) all persons to be employed in asbestos mines are required to undergo initial Medical Examination and Periodic Medical Examination once every three years including chest X-Ray and lung function test under Rule 29-B of the Mines Rules, 1955.

(ii) Occupational diseases which may occur due to exposure to asbestos dust such as asbestosis, cancer of lung, stomach, pleura and peritoneum are notified diseases under Section 25 of the Mines Act, 1952.

(iii) Regulation 124 of Metalliferous Mines Regulations, 1961 provides for regular monitoring of asbestos dust levels in mines, dust control measures and use of personal protective equipment. It also prescribes 2 fibers per milliliter of air as the permissible limit for asbestos fiber dust in the work environment.

(iv) Bureau of Indian Standards has also formulated Indian Standards onvarious aspects of safety in use of asbestos including on asbestos mines and mills.

(v) From time to time the Government agencies such as Directorate Generalo f Mines Safety, National Institutes of Occupational Health. Directorate General Factory Advice Service and Labour Institutes, Indian Bureau ofMines, etc. have been conducting dust surveys in asbestos mines.